



PRE-PRIMARY TEACHERS & TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN MEGHALAYA

Wandaka Nikhla¹ | Prof. C. Nongbri²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Education, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

² Head of Department, Department of Education; North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an integral part of the school education, which has a strong bearing especially upon primary education and an important component for achieving universal enrolment and retention in primary schools. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) on Early Childhood Education (ECE), 2005 recommended that, the training of professional in the field of early childhood require new thinking about the careful consideration on the issue to create training programmes that will provide opportunities to teachers to teach in any programme catering up to 8 years and enhancing the capacity of existing training institutions. It is to be mentioned that there are scant facilities for teacher preparation in the area of ECE in the education sector as far as Meghalaya is concerned. The nursery teacher training institutions in pre-primary education is negligible or not available in the state. Due to lack of such facilities in Meghalaya and lack of human resource in this area, the quality of ECE has remained a big concern. DERT & DIETs are also inadequately equipped in conducting training programme in ECE effectively. With this concern the investigator felt the need to investigate on pre-primary teacher's profile and the training programmes for ECE in Meghalaya.

KEYWORDS: pre-primary teachers; teacher education programme; ECE (early childhood education) District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs); Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT)]

INTRODUCTION:

The aim of early childhood education (ECE) is to facilitate optimum development of the child's full potential and lay the foundation of all round development and lifelong learning. NCF-2005 emphasizes that good quality early childhood education (ECE) program have a positive impact on children all round development. According to Kaul, (2009) Early Childhood Education or Pre-School Education or Pre-Primary Education is the educational programmes for children of 3 to 6 years (as seen in anganwadis, balwadis, nurseries, pre-schools, kindergartens, preparatory schools, etc). While in the long term perspective, Pre-school Education (PSE) has also proved to be an effective input for primary schooling. Consequently, the last few decades have seen an unprecedented expansion of pre-school education facilities in the country, both in government and non-government sector. This expansion has, however not ensured quality control in these programmes. In some cases the programmes tend to remain merely custodial in nature and do not at all meet the objectives of a pre-school education programme.

NCF (2005) states that, this quality of pre-school education programme depend on the quality of staff and is the single most important factor in determining the quality of the programme, while this important factor is a neglected aspect of the educational system. The teachers/ staffs in an ECE programme are facilitators who need to be knowledgeable about children's development and early childhood curriculum and should be skilled at implementing the programme. Preparation of ECE teachers, training, coaching and ongoing support, which is very crucial, is hardly emphasised. The State government has not clearly laid down any norms for staff qualifications or remuneration or any guidelines for recognition of pre-school staff as teachers. Though it was recommended by the Kothari Commission that the government should take the responsibility of training the teachers, it is evident the government has not taken the full responsibility of conducting training programmes for teachers teaching at pre-school level to acquaint teachers to the newly emerging trends.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Yadav (2015) addressed that pre-primary level is the most neglected and least developed sector in India and that no state govt. has laid any norms for staff qualifications or remunerations or guidelines. Singh and Singh, (2015) states that access and coverage for ECE does not mean much in terms of quality and that there is paucity of professionally trained early childhood teachers due to reasons of very limited number of institutions for early childhood teachers. Sharma, (2014) recommended the importance of restructuring teacher education programmes such that pre-school and primary teachers can have a course together as this can bring in continuity from pre-school to primary. Hangsing, (2013) studied that majority of teachers teaching at pre-primary levels are professionally untrained and at the same time they did not have opportunity to upgrade their knowledge by attending training programmes, seminars, workshops. Kaul et al (2013) presents a snapshot of the status in India with some states like Meghalaya show a significant number of pre-primary schools attached with primary sections but have almost no access to any teacher education institution. Abraham (2011) opines that for quality ECCE programme, the staffs are important factors, yet this aspect is neglected. It can be further added that Syiem, (2009)

revealed that the State (Meghalaya), till date has no Teacher Training Institute for Pre-Primary teachers hence most teachers are untrained and that the general qualification of teachers is +2 level passed. Pandey (2005) found that uneven geographical distribution by teacher education training centres' existed, and no centre was found in the North East Region. Husen and Neville (1985) in their study mentioned that around the world it appears that the majority of people teaching 5 or 6 years old have had no pre-service training at all and only sporadic in-service courses or workshop.

Thus, many studies reviewed give evidences that arrived at a general conclusion where vast majority of pre-school teachers are professionally untrained and there is less opportunity for in-service training programmes.

NEED & JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY:

There are many factors that influence the quality of education. However, of all these factors, teacher and teacher preparation programme is of utmost importance. The success of educational systems depends largely on the quality of good teachers. No one can deny the key-role and prime importance of teacher in any system of education prevailing in any society or nation. Teachers remain the most important medium to teach students and facilitate learning. Committed and prepared teachers can be instrumental in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and greatly help in realizing the constitutional commitment to provide quality education up to the age of 14 years. In this context, the task of development of abilities or qualities in terms of competencies among teachers becomes very significant. Such teachers can be prepared through well organized teacher development programmes.

There is a general feeling among various stakeholders in the State that the Government negligence regarding Pre-school has affected the development of the Pre-school Education in the State. What is the minimum educational qualification specified for the pre-school teachers? Do pre-school teachers possess the required professional qualification and experience?

The review of related literature in India and abroad shows that the finding of most of the studies have pointed out towards under qualified and untrained teaching staffs with inadequate training facilities for teachers. With this concern the investigator felt the need to investigate on pre-primary teacher's profile and the training programmes for ECE in Meghalaya.

Statement of the Problem:

From the above discussion, the problem of the study is entitled as: "Pre-Primary Teachers & Teacher Education Programme in Meghalaya".

Objectives of the study:

1. To find out the profile of teachers with respect to their educational qualification/ professional qualification and experience.
2. To find out the status of pre-primary Teacher Education Programme in Meghalaya.

Operational definition of terms used:

Pre-primary teachers refer to the Teachers teaching at Pre-primary level for children at the age groups 3 to 6 years.

Teacher education programme refers to the Teacher Education programme for professional development of teachers

ECE (Early Childhood Education) - refers to the learning experiences that are provided to early childhood years.

Delimitation of the study:

The Study is delimited to the pre-primary school teachers of East & West Khasi Hills Districts of Meghalaya.

METHODOLOGY:

Descriptive Survey Method was used for the study. A representative sample was drawn randomly that comprised of pre-primary school teachers of East & West Khasi Hills Districts of Meghalaya. All categories of schools were included as well as all DIETs of Meghalaya.

Districts	Pre-Primary Schools Teachers			
	Govt.	Govt. Aided	Private	Total
East Khasi Hills	20	103	35	158
West Khasi Hills	19	105	30	154
Total	39	208	65	312

Tools:

The tools used for the study were Information Schedule for Pre-primary Teachers and an Interview schedule for DIET faculties.

Procedure for Collection of Data:

For the study, the source of data collection comprised of both Primary and Secondary sources. The Primary source of information was collected from all the respondents using the tools that were developed for pre-primary school teachers and DIET faculties. The secondary sources that were used in the study were official documents, reports, government records, journals, etc.

Analysis and interpretation of data:

Data was collected through the Information Schedule and Interview schedule and interpreted using percentages. Below are the results and discussion of findings.

1. Teacher's profile:

The study found that almost all (93%) Pre-Primary teachers are female. This finding is similar to study findings of Kumar, 1968. It was also found that almost all (96%) of the Pre-Primary teachers are Scheduled Tribe; this is so, as the population in both the districts belongs mainly (85%) to Scheduled Tribe. This finding is similar to study findings of Kapadia 1980 stating that teachers who belong to the local community and were familiar with the language, customs and traditions of the community worked well.

The researcher in the study found that the Pre-Primary teachers are highly qualified where a good percentage of them (about 30%) was having secondary level qualification, Higher Secondary level and Graduates with a few (below 5%) teachers have Post Graduate degree. The findings corroborate with that of Syiem, (2009) but contradict to the findings of Mialaret, (1976) which state that teachers are under qualified.

Regarding the years of service, majority of the Pre-Primary Teachers (60%) have been teaching for more than five years while 40% have teaching experience ranging from less than a year to about five years experience. It was also reported that some of the teachers are committed and responsive to child's need which could be the results of their experience. This finding is similar to the findings of Seaborn, (2002) who found that teachers with several years of experience were able to perform well.

Regarding the employment status of teachers at the pre-primary level, it was found in most government schools (76%) teachers are full time but were not appointed as pre-primary teachers as it was reported that there is no sanction post for pre-primary teacher. The teachers are from the primary section. However, in some government schools, teachers are appointed to teach only preschools section with a consolidated amount fixed by the schools, whereas in a few government aided schools, primary teachers take turn to teach the preschoolers as per the time table of the school i.e. period wise as done for higher classes.

2. Teacher Education Programmes:

On professional qualification, the study reveals that high proportion of Pre-Primary teachers do not have any kind of pre-service training with respect to pre-school education but few reported as having undergone courses relating to elementary education like D.El.Ed/ BTC/ JTTC; The reason may be that there is absence of Pre-School courses/ programmes being run by the go-

vernment in the State. Moreover, there was no demand of such Teacher Education programmes for recruitment basis.

The study also reveals that in-service training programmes were attended by less number (30%) of Pre-Primary teachers during last five years i.e. from 2012 to 2017. These programmes were conducted by DIETs, SSA, and DERT on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and General Teacher's training programme for a period of few days to two weeks. The programmes were mostly on general orientation, curriculum and development of TLM. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Hangsing, (2013) who remarked that pre-primary teachers are professionally untrained and at the same time did not have short term in-service training.

Having interviewed the faculties of DIETs of Meghalaya on matters relating to ECCE it was found that DIETs East and West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya are having either one or two teacher educators working in the area of ECCE. These faculties are trained in ECCE i.e. having completed either the diploma from NCERT-Delhi or certificate course from NERIE-Meghalaya. All DIETs are having the basic infrastructure, outdoor space, instructional classroom facilities as well as ICT to conduct training programmes along with human resources including fine arts/ music faculty.

It was found that the DIETs conducted short term training programmes at least once a year on ECCE for in-service Pre-primary /Lower Primary teachers; however DIETs do not have a training module on ECCE. It can be said that no DIETs have taken up any research activity on ECCE. There was no monitoring system on the training programmes conducted so far and there are no set norms/rules for implementing ECCE in whole of Meghalaya.

However, the study reveals that in recent years in-service programmes for the pre-primary teachers have been reduced to a minimal level due to the misconception among the Education functionaries. Since the Social Welfare Department is active in the pre-school programme (ECCE programme) it is duplication of works so it is not necessarily for the Education Department to take further initiatives. Therefore, in-service pre-primary teacher education has been neglected for some time now. And there is no monitoring activity conducted by the state on pre-primary schools. Also, there are no set government norms/rules for implementing ECCE in whole of Meghalaya.

At present there is no ECCE cell or unit at the DERT, Meghalaya, but there is a lecturer with Diploma in ECCE, who takes care of matters related to ECCE. The Directorate is equipped with adequate infrastructure in terms of training halls and materials required for conducting training programmes. The Directorate also conducts short-term in-service trainings for pre-primary teachers and there is no monitoring activity conducted by DERT on the pre-primary schools.

It is interesting to report that the North East Regional Institute of Education (NERIE), a constituent unit of NCERT is offering a Certificate Course in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) which was launched from 3rd Jan 2014 to train professionals who can contribute in providing ECCE where it is not available and also in improving its quality. The course is targeted at faculty from DIETs/ SCERT/ICDS officials/ professionals working in the area of ECCE /Nursery Teacher Training institutions and those interested in the area of ECCE.

IMPLICATIONS:

The findings of the study shows the State is devoid of Pre-primary Teacher Education institutions which implies that the state government has seriously overlooked the responsibility of providing training to teachers. Absence of Pre-primary Teacher Education institutions resulted in the vast number of untrained teachers at this level. With lack of trained pre-school teachers with right mindset and temperament, it will be difficult to sensitize and make them aware about their roles and responsibilities and to translate the objectives of Pre-schools Programme.

Though the government mandated to the DIETs the responsibility of overseeing the Early Childhood Education programme in the districts, which is logical, considering the area of work operation of the DIETs, it may be said that the current scenario does not go well with DIETs as there is no ECCE cell or unit to look after ECCE. In the absence of trained teacher educator, it implies that minimum infrastructural faculties available in each and every DIET will not be effectively exploited for a greater interest of strengthening the programme of ECCE.

However, few pre-primary schools enjoyed fixed salary with government efforts while the remaining pre-primary teachers are appointed on honorarium payment mode.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Under such prevailing conditions depicting apathetic attitude of the government it will take a long-time to close the gap created by the vast backlog of inadequately prepared or unprepared teachers in addition to training of newcomers who are entering the field. Unless proper measures are put in place, the programme would be bound to suffer. It is therefore recommended that:

- The Department of Education must take responsibility for all programmes relating to teacher education of children of 3 years upwards and set up Teacher Education Institutions of acceptable standards & norms crucial for ECCE.
- In absence of pre-primary training institutions in the state, an alternative can be arranged by the Government to create opportunities and arrangements for training at the present existing training institutions in the form of in-service, distance learning programmes so that staff get the opportunity to climb the career ladder.
- The In-Service Teacher Education programmes for teachers can be organized so as to provide opportunities to teachers to ensure improved quality across all programmes with provisions available to children across the country and that the services offered are of the right quality that serves the best interest of the child.
- Training for Early Childhood professionals has to be addressed by the State Education Department. It is important to give priority to capacity building of trainers, building of resources in terms of teaching and instructional materials, field experiences and funding. Capacity building with respect to planning, administrative, monitoring and responsibility shared with the various Departments of education and the creation of a separate unit or section of ECCE in the department to promote convergence of all early childhood programmes and provision is the need of the hour.
- Present state of pre-schools education in the State demands the concrete step in terms of policy decision regarding various aspect of pre-school teacher education. Directives from the government should be provided for ensuring the optimum developmental opportunities for children and to promote professionalism in the field.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, it can be said that Early Childhood Education which is a pre-school education (PSE) focused programme has to be properly monitored because unless pre-primary education is effective, it may be hard to achieve quality learning outcomes at elementary education stage. A developmentally appropriate well designed programme for capacity building of teachers, human resource development and convergence of stakeholders, to achieve the standards and sustaining the later development of education are some of the main determinants of quality Early Childhood Education programme and therefore quality teacher education programme is necessary for maintaining quality which is the responsibility of the Government and stakeholders at large.

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Appendices-I

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Appendices II
(figures in brackets represents the percentages)

Table 1.1 Social Categories

Responses	East Khasi Hills(EKH)				West Khasi Hills(WKH)				Grand Total	
	Type of Pre-schools				Type of Pre-schools					
	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total		
Schedule caste (SC)	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	4	
	0	0	0	0	0	(4)	0	(3)	(1)	
Schedule tribe (ST)	19	98	27	144	20	99	35	154	298	
	(100)	(93)	(90)	(94)	(100)	(96)	(100)	(97)	(96)	
Others	0	7	3	10	0	0	0	0	10	
	0	(7)	(10)	(6)	0	0	0	0	(3)	

Table 1.2: Educational qualification

Responses	East Khasi Hills(EKH)				West Khasi Hills(WKH)				Grand Total	
	Type of Pre-schools				Type of Pre-schools					
	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total		
Secondary	3	34	5	42	9	31	6	46	88	
	(16)	(32)	(17)	(27)	(45)	(30)	(17)	(29)	(28)	
Higher secondary	11	34	11	56	8	43	12	63	119	
	(58)	(32)	(37)	(36)	(40)	(42)	(34)	(40)	(38)	
Graduate	4	29	13	46	3	26	17	46	92	
	(21)	(28)	(43)	(30)	(15)	(25)	(49)	(29)	(30)	
Post graduate	1	8	1	10	0	3	0	3	13	
	(5)	(8)	(3)	(7)	0	(3)	0	(2)	(4)	

Table 1.3: Professional qualification

Responses	East Khasi Hills(EKH)				West Khasi Hills(WKH)				Grand Total	
	Type of Pre-schools									
	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total		
Diploma	2	8	1	11	4	5	4	13	24	
	(11)	(8)	(3)	(7)	(20)	(5)	(11)	(8)	(8)	
B.Ed or equivalent	0	7	0	7	1	0	1	2	9	
	0	(7)	0	(5)	(5)	0	(3)	(1)	(3)	
Others	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	
	(5)	0	0	(1)	0	(1)	0	(1)	(1)	

Responses	East Khasi Hills(EKH)				West Khasi Hills(WKH)				Grand Total	
	Type of Pre-schools									
	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total	Govt	Govt Aided	Private	Total		
Regular/ fulltime	12	79	28	119	12	79	26	117	236	
	(63)	(75)	(93)	(77)	(60)	(77)	(74)	(74)	(76)	
Leave vacancy	1	1	0	2	0	3	0	3	5	
	(5)	(1)	0	(1)	0	(3)	0	(2)	(1)	
Contractual/ temporary	6	25	2	33	8	21	9	38	71	
	(32)	(24)	(7)	(21)	(40)	(20)	(26)	(24)	(23)	